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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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August 10, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2123 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone:

I write to you today regarding the large-scale power outages which resulted from the devastating effects of Tropical Storm Isaias. In the aftermath of the storm more than 1 million people found themselves without power and no clear answer on when they could expect relief. I know that you share my concern for the millions of Americans across the country coping with record summer heat and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I ask that the Energy and Commerce Committee examine the overall recovery response in Isaias-impacted regions like the Hudson Valley.

Poor planning has compounded an already difficult situation for many Americans. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to escalate across the US, millions are working from home in order to combat the spread. Recent news reports detail accounts of people lining up at libraries to access the internet and charge their devices. Not only does this impact the livelihoods of many families, it threatens to worsen the spread of this deadly virus. Additionally, with much of the country facing record high temperatures this summer, many older Americans and vulnerable populations could be facing life-threatening conditions if they are forced to go days without power.

The aftermath of this storm has exposed serious gaps with the country's response plans for natural disaster recovery during the pandemic. This is concerning as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is predicting an "extremely active" hurricane season with as many as twenty-five named storms coming this year. I know that, under your leadership, the Energy and Commerce Committee has prioritized natural disaster preparedness. We must learn from Isaias, determine what went wrong, and enact forward looking policies before another disaster strikes. In particular, I believe we should consider legislation to provide additional federal support and financing to help invest in more resilient electrical and telecommunications infrastructure, including hardening powerlines, burying critical lines, and providing battery and backup generators.

I know that your committee continues to provide robust oversight of the nation's energy infrastructure. I believe that the wide-spread outages resulting from Tropical Storm Isaias warrant further examination by the Energy and Commerce Committee and provide us with an opportunity to improve how we prepare for and respond to disasters. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress